

BLOOMINGTON-NORMAL MLRTP 2050

Appendix Three | Project Steering
Committee & Focus Groups Meeting Notes

McLEAN COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION | 2022



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Project Steering Committee (PSC)

Meeting Notes

Meeting 1

Tuesday, March 15, 2022, 1:00 P.M. (In-Person and Virtual)

Room 404 Government Center (115 E. Washington St.)

Members Present:

Dan Magee, IDOT; Bob Nelson, IDOT; Mike Gebeke*, ISU; Carl Teichman, IWU; Chuck Irwin, District 87; Jerry Stokes, County HWY; Ryan Otto, ToN; Kevin Kothe, CoB; Carl Olson, CIRA; Cathy Coverston-Anderson, County Health; David Braun, Connect Transit

Others Present:

Brandon Geber*, IDOT; Luke Hohulin, County HWY; MCRPC Staff – Raymond Lai, Jennifer Sicks, Gregory Huss, Ana Mendoza, Tania Barreto, Katie McShane

* Attended Virtually

1. Call to Order

Mr. Raymond Lai called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

2. Attendance

PSC members that were present in person and virtually introduced themselves to the committee. MCRPC staff also introduced themselves.

3. Project Background

Mr. Lai explained the objective of the meeting and of the steering committee. McLean County Regional Planning Commission is preparing the Metropolitan Long Range Transportation Plan (MLRTP) 2050 update. The plan needs to be updated every 5 years as a Federal mandate. Mr. Lai also explained that the MLRTP 2050 will be prepared in house by MCRPC staff and lead by Ms. Sicks. Some aspects the technical staff will need to consider and some of the challenges when updating the MLRTP 2050 such as:

- Changes in the population based on the 2020 Census;
- Impacts of the pandemic on populations' way of living and transportation patterns

4. Expectations

The PSC will participate in the preparation of the

plan by reviewing each draft chapter and making comments/suggestions during monthly meetings. The draft will be sent to the PSC members before the monthly meeting with enough time to review.

5. Project Schedule

- Ms. Sicks provided an explanation of a work timeline. MCRPC will work on one chapter at the time, and a draft of each chapter will be sent to the PSC every month for review.
- To complete each chapter, focus groups will be held with experts on each subject. The next focus group will be about Transit. Results and discussion ideas from the focus groups will be put forward to Committee members for comments.
- MCRPC will have population projections for the next 5 to 25 years calculated by outside sources. Global and past events such as the effects of the pandemic will be considered in the projections.
- A Community Survey about transportation was prepared by MCRPC and will be available online after the kickoff meeting for the community to participate. The survey is launched every time the Plan is updated and answers provide a better understanding of the issues and concerns the community has about our transportation system.
- Ms. Sicks mentioned that a first draft of the MLRTP 2050 will have to be completed by August 2022. The Plan's final approval will be in October 2022.

6. Future PSC monthly meetings schedule

Members of the PSC tentatively agreed to meet on the second half of the month, at 4:00pm. A poll will be sent out to all PSC members to decide on the day of the week that best suits everyone (options are between Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday)

7. Information on Demographics

Ms. Mendoza did a presentation with graphs and maps of the McLean County population characteristics and changes during the past five years. Data was obtained from the US Census 2020 and from the American Census Survey (ACS) 2019 (data obtained from the ACS will be updated with information from the 2020 Census).

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The presentation included population's characteristics based on age, sex, race and income; and comparisons of population characteristics against transit and trails.

8. Other discussion items

Committee members discussed options on how to reach out to all community with the survey. Mostly the distribution will be carried out by MCRPC online and through advertising in public areas. Additionally some members offered help:

- Mr. David Braun, offered the possibility to have publicity displayed in Connect Transit Buses and in their Facebook page.
- Mr. Chuck Irwin, representing District 87, also offered to send the community survey to the schools district.

Ms. Sicks mentioned that given time constraints results from the first Focus Group will not be sent to PSC in time for the next meeting.

Mr. Lai mentioned that materials from this meeting will be sent out to all PSC members, which include, Demographics PPT presentation, a copy of the timeline and meeting minutes.

9. Next PSC Meeting – Date and Plan Topic

Date: TBD, second week of the month.

Topic: Review of Metropolitan Long Range Transportation Plan's draft Chapters 1 & 2.

10. Adjourn

Mr. Lai adjourned the meeting at 2:15 p.m

Meeting 2

Tuesday, April 20, 2022, 2:00 P.M. (In-Person and Virtual)

Room 324, McLean County Health Department

Members Present:

Dan Magee, IDOT; Bob Nelson, IDOT; Mike Gebeke*, ISU; Carl Teichman*, IWU; Chuck Irwin, District 87; Jerry Stokes, County Highway; Ryan Otto, ToN; Kevin Kothe, CoB; Carl Olson, CIRA; Cathy Coverston-Anderson, County Health

Others Present:

Luke Hohulin, County Highway; MCRPC Staff – Raymond Lai, Jennifer Sicks, Gregory Huss, Ana Mendoza, Tania Barreto, Katie McShane

* Attended Virtually

1. Project Schedule Update

Mr. Lai provided a summary of the work carried out during the past month.

- There were two minor updates to the Timeline.
 - Changed the name from "Subcommittee" to "Focus Group".
 - The names of the chapters were updated. A new version of the schedule will be e-mailed to Committee members.
- Survey: So far, we have received almost 300 survey responses. We advertised at different venues and events. Surveys and flyers are in English, Spanish and French, to reach out the different population groups.
- Staff invited suggestions and help from PSC members on sharing the surveys.
- Focus Groups: Last month, MCRPC staff held two focus group meetings: Public Transit and Health & Social Services. Summaries of findings will be explained by Mr. Greg Huss.
- Chapter One of the Plan: PSC members should have received a copy of draft Chapter One for review and comments. The deadline to send comments is Monday April 25. However, the draft is work in progress and may be updated later with additional data and information. Opportunities for review of the updated document will be available later.

2. Focus Groups Discussion Summary (Greg Huss)

a. Public Transit (4/12)

The idea was to have conversations with Public Transit providers and users. Representatives of Connect Transit and SHOW BUS attended the

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meeting.

Main Discussion:

- Urban Ridership decreased during COVID. However, those numbers have increased steadily in the past few months. Connect Transit reported that current ridership numbers are almost the same as the numbers before COVID.
- Rural ridership had different trends during the same time. SHOWBUS operated regularly during COVID, the system also offered additional services such as delivering meals. However, at present all additional services have stopped. There is a driver shortage and routes are running only when customers make reservations.
- Companies are developing strategies to increase transit ridership. Some of the objectives include offering transit where routes do not currently reach such as residential developments or areas with high number of work positions.

Questions:

Q. Where does the Transit Center negotiation stand?

As published in the news, Connect Transit has a possible location selected, and a federal grant award to develop the Center. The idea is to have a sheltered place for passengers accessible to all that will offer not only public transit service but connections to other transport modes, similar to the one in Uptown Normal.

Q. Was access to health care facilities considered in Focus Groups?

Yes, it was discussed.

b. Health & Social Services (4/13)

This meeting had a higher attendance rate than the public transportation one. Attendees represented a variety of agencies.

Main Discussion:

- Expansion of operating hours and expansion of the services. Ideas discussed were ways in which the rural population has access to health care and can reach to their health care needs even outside of McLean County.
- Central Information Hub. The way in which information about the existing services are offered have a "silo effect". There are several services available for the community however, many times people call one service and if they do not offer what the person needs, people are not re-directed to the organization that could potentially help them. People would be able

to take more advantage of the services if there was a Central Hub where they could call and information about all the options is explained to them.

- Advocacy is very important. There were several programs that worked successfully during the pandemic such as delivery of Meals On Wheels. All those have now been stopped, however with a strong advocacy those services and additional ones could be implemented once again (e.g. delivery of groceries by public transport providers).
- Health Departments in IL are required to prepare a Community Health Needs Assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan every 5 years. Hospitals are required to do that every 3 years. Since 2015, Hospitals and the Health Department in McLean County have been doing joint reports. One of the three priorities that the plan incorporates is "Access to Care". They will start the next Plan update this fall.

Questions:

Q. Did Connect Transit mention strategic plans for the next 10 years?

Yes, offering transit access to communities that do not currently have. They are working on identifying the needs of the community such as offering transit access to Rivian.

Q. Were potential funding ideas discussed?

The focus was not on funding, it was not heavily discussed. However, in a later part of the B-N MLRTP-2050 we will look at potential funding sources.

Q. Are Focus Groups going to meet again?

For the two that have meet, we are not planning to have further meetings. However, participants from each group can approach MCRPC with any comments or concerns.

3. Other Discussion Items

- Committee members were asked to let staff know if they have ideas that can be incorporated in the plan or if there are themes that they think need to be discussed in Focus Groups.
- Ms. Sicks will be sending the questions discussed at the Focus Groups to those members that were invited, but did not attend.
- Committee members were asked to send Draft Chapter One feedback or comments to Ms. Sicks or Mr. Lai by Monday, April 25.

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- Mr. Lai will send out an Agenda and additional information to Committee members.

4. Next PSC Meeting

5/18 @ 2pm, same location (Room 324, McLean County Health Department)

5. Adjourn

Mr. Lai adjourned the meeting at 2:45 p.m.

Meeting 3

Wednesday, May 18, 2022, 2:00 P.M. (In-Person and Virtual)

Room 324, McLean County Health Department

Members Present:

Bob Nelson, IDOT; Mike Gebeke, ISU; Carl Teichman, IWU; Chuck Irwin, District 87; Jerry Stokes, County Highway; Kevin Kothe, CoB; Carl Olson*, CIRA; Cathy Coverston-Anderson, County Health

Others Present:

Robert Innis*, IDOT; Luke Hohulin*, County Highway; Jessica McKnight, County Health; MCRPC Staff – Raymond Lai, Jennifer Sicks, Gregory Huss, Ana Mendoza, Tania Barreto, Katie McShane

* Attended Virtually

1. Introduction

All attendees introduced themselves.

2. Project Schedule Update

Mr. Lai provided a summary of the work carried out during the past month.

- Survey: so far, we have received around 330 survey responses. We advertised at different venues and events. MCRPC staff attended a family day at Tipton Park on Saturday May 14. Over 200 flyers were delivered.
 - Future events MCRPC staff will attend: Bloomington Farmer’s Market, Chamber of Commerce Job Fair, churches and ethnic markets. The survey is to be completed until the end of June 2022.
 - Staff invited PSC members to help distribute the survey and encourage people to participate.
- Focus Groups: Last month, MCRPC staff held

the Pedestrian and Bicycle Focus Group.

- Chapter Two of the Plan: MCRPC staff are working on the draft Chapter Two which will be a work in progress. PSC members should receive a copy for review on the week of May 23 to 27.

3. Pedestrian and Bicycle Focus Group (5/11) Discussion Highlights

Ms. Sicks presented highlights of the discussion during the Pedestrian and Bicycle Focus Group meeting. There were representatives from different organizations including NGOs (Friends of the Constitution Trail, Lake Run Club and McLean County Wheelers), Government organizations (CoB, ToN and Mclean County Government, CoB Parks, CoB Police, ToN Police, McLean County Sheriff’s Office and ISU Police.

Dangerous locations for pedestrians and bicycles: Veterans Parkway was mentioned several times. It is considered unsafe to be there and to cross it for pedestrians and bicyclists.

- Other streets mentioned - Main St. and College Ave. particularly sections close to ISU campus. They are high traffic roads and there are hundreds of students trying to cross them daily.
- Bike lanes in B-N are too dangerous. Trails far from cars are considered safer.
- Good locations for pedestrian and bike users:
 - Constitution Trail underpass to cross Veterans Parkway is the only safe way available to cross Veterans Parkway.
 - Front St. improvements from 2-3 years ago.
 - Uptown Circle: forces cars to slow down so that pedestrians and bicycles can cross.
 - Bike lanes from Hudson to B-N: people use them, like them and want more.
- High priority locations to increase safety:
 - Road conditions impact bike use: pavement condition e.g. pot holes or the weather have an enormous impact on bike use.
 - Trails are the safest existing places for bikes and pedestrians.
 - Corner of Main St. and College Ave. in Normal needs work. IDOT is currently working on that. Large numbers of people cross that intersection.
 - Intersection of Veterans Parkway and Empire St. There are many people that walk along Empire St. and cross Veterans Parkway when there are no provisions for pedestrians.
- Thoughts on Pedestrian Network:

- Neighborhood streets are connected well internally. However, they are not well connected with each other. Lack of connectivity encourages people to drive.
- Bike facilities are better than pedestrian facilities. Sidewalks tend to disappear.
- Uptown and Downtown trails represent safer conditions to travel for cyclists and pedestrians. There should be more trails connecting the City and Town.
- More attention to ADA compliance is needed, so not just people in bicycles are served but people with mobility issues.

How to support walking and bike use as transportation alternatives?

- Better education for the community:
 - Drivers need to be aware and stop for pedestrians.
 - People walking and cycling also need to be aware of their surroundings.
- Using Traffic Calming measures to help control and make streets safer for pedestrians and bicycles such as reducing traffic speed. Most common measure are speed bumps.
- Tactical Urbanism: Before making investments, changes to streets are made using cheap removable materials such as paint, cones and tape. For example: before doing the permanent changes to Front St., cones and barricades were used to mimic upgrades and to get people (drivers and pedestrians) used to the proposed measures that included safety islands and crossing points.

How can we better provide access to all?

- Consider major employees and important destinations to create connections from different points of the city to these locations. Connect places where people live to their major destinations.
- Connecting people between modes so that they can ride a bicycle and use transit.
- Encouraging walking and cycling:
- "Bike/Walk Day": To encourage people to walk and cycle, it was suggested a few streets in Downtown and Uptown are closed one day a week for a few hours (Sunday morning). This way people will have a chance to ride or walk.
- Other ideas mentioned: bike rodeos, bike donation and bike sharing programs.
- Plan for multimodal transport.
- Consider impact of e-scooters/e-bikes.
- Intersection design: signals with longer crossing

times.

- Implementing 4-directions cross walks
- Implementing speed bumps including re-designing the entire intersection.

4. Other Discussion Items

There were no additional discussion items.

5. Next PSC Meeting

Date: June 15, 2022.

6. Adjourn

Mr. Lai adjourned the meeting at 2:45 p.m.

Meeting 4

Wednesday, June 15, 2022, 2:00 P.M. (In-Person and Virtual)

Room 324, McLean County Health Department

Members Present:

Bob Nelson, IDOT; Dan Magee, IDOT; Mike Gebeke*, ISU; Carl Teichman, IWU; Chuck Irwin, District 87; Stan Gozur*, Unit District No. 5; Kevin Kothe, CoB; Carl Olson*, CIRA; Cathy Coverston-Anderson, County Health; David Braun, Connect Transit

Others Present:

Robert Innis*, IDOT; Luke Hohulin*, County Highway; MCRPC Staff – Raymond Lai, Jennifer Sicks, Gregory Huss, Ana Mendoza, Tania Barreto, Katie McShane

* Attended Virtually

1. Project Schedule Update

Mr. Lai provided a summary of the work carried out during the past month.

Survey:

- So far, we have received 670 responses.
- MCRPC staff has attended several events to promote the survey and get community's opinions on the transportation system. They include:
 - Chamber of Commerce job fair on May/24th.
 - Farmers market on Saturday June 11th. Over 100 flyers were distributed and an activity where people could identify areas/issues they have with the different transportation modes: walking, cycling, using transit and driving

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was carried out. Information collected will be considered in the MLRTP.

- The survey will close in two weeks (June 30th). MCRPC staff will launch a press release one last time to encourage people to take the survey.

Focus Groups:

Last month, MCRPC staff held the Commerce and Freight Focus Group meeting.

The next focus group meeting will held on June 29th, it will be about Connected and Automated Vehicles (CA) and Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS).

MLRTP Chapters:

MCRPC staff are working on draft Chapters Three and Four which will be a work in progress.

2. Commerce and Freight Focus Group (6/8)

Invitations to the focus group were sent to over 20 regional freight companies and local businesses.

- Attendees included representatives from State Farm, Rivian, Nussbaum Transportation, Prairie Central Co-op and OSF amongst others.
- The meeting was held in two parts. 1) A SWOT analysis with all attendees. 2) To encourage a deeper conversation, people were divided into Commerce and Freight groups. The same questions were asked to both groups.
- A follow up email was sent to all representatives invited to add or make new comments.
- For discussion highlights, refer to PPT file.

3. Comments & Questions

Commerce:

Q. Based on the roundabout in Uptown Normal. Are people now more receptive to having more roundabouts? **A.** There might appear new proposals for roundabouts. Perception is that there are different types such as traffic calming ones or higher speed ones.

Q. Is there any push back of roundabouts from neighborhoods saying they don't like them? **A.** Typically what neighbors don't like is giving maintenance (landscape in the middle). Bloomington asks neighbors to maintain roundabouts after being built. Speed bumps are easier to maintain and are a more effective traffic calming measure.

Roundabouts are good to handle transitions between 1 and 2 lanes. Roundabouts take more space at intersections. It is difficult to place them.

Q. Was FedEx invited? **A.** Yes, but they did not send

a representative.

Freight:

Q. How/where do trucks connect now with rail?

A. There is a rail yard on West Bloomington, the other location is at Rivian. Ideal would be to have an intermodal facility in McLean County.

Q. Was there discussion on Navigation?

A. No. The city wants trucks to use state routes designed to handle heavy traffic. Before trucks used state routes, but now with google maps, carriers are using rural and city roads for shorter distances.

Roads are being damaged and communities are at risk. The city does not have a "truck routes map". State routes are designed for trucks, considering weight and space.

About 40 years ago most businesses used rail, now most use trucks to transport.

Need for a truck routes map.

State is preparing their Freight Plan and District Freight Plans. They will have information about commodity flows and forecasts for 2050, will share some data with us.

Q. Are police officers invited to the planning, to know their staffing requirements for enforcement?

A. They were not invited to this Focus Group, however they were invited to the Pedestrian and Bicycle Focus Group.

4. Next PSC Meeting

Next meeting: Wednesday July 20th, 2022.

5. Adjourn

Mr. Lai adjourned the meeting at 3:05 p.m.

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Meeting 5

Wednesday, July 20, 2022, 2:00 P.M. (In-Person and Virtual)

Room 324, McLean County Health Department

Members Present:

Dan Magee*, IDOT; Chuck Irwin, District 87; Stan Gozur*, Unit District No. 5; Kevin Kothe, CoB; Carl Olson*, CIRA

Others Present:

Robert Innis*, IDOT; Luke Hohulin*, County Highway; Tony Meizelis* (ToN); MCRPC Staff – Raymond Lai, Jennifer Sicks, Gregory Huss, Ana Mendoza, Tania Barreto, Katie McShane*

* Attended Virtually

1. Project Schedule Update

Mr. Lai provided a summary of the work carried out during the past month.

Focus Groups:

Last month, MCRPC staff held the final focus group meeting: Connected and Autonomous Vehicles (CAVs), and Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS). Highlights will be presented by Ms. Sicks.

Survey:

The community survey is still open, but only responses submitted until June 30th (730 responses) will be used in the MLRTP 2050.

MLRTP Chapters:

- Yesterday, July 19th, PSC members should have received Draft Chapter 4 for review and comments.
- PSC members should be getting Draft Chapter 5 by the end of this week (Friday 21st). An e-mail with expected dates to make comments will be sent out to all.

Population Projection:

- MCRPC hired a consultant to do a population projection until 2050. The MCRPC Commission approved the contract in the July meeting. The work will be carried out by Dr. Andrew Greenlee, an independent consultant but also with the University of Illinois and outcomes will be incorporated in the MLRTP 2050.

2. CAV and ITS Focus Group Discussion

- Invitations to the focus group were sent to over 15 organizations and companies including IDOT, Rivian, Caterpillar, John Deere, Honeywell

(Developers of eVITOLs).

- Attendees included representatives from State Farm, IDOT (Central Office and District 5), Universities (University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Illinois State University), McLean County, CoB and ToN.
- A follow-up email was sent to all representatives invited to add or make new comments.

Technology that could be implemented in 3-10 years:

- Several things could happen very quickly such as mapping cities.
- Some new tech is already in existence, no need for special infrastructure. Examples around country of CAV used as car sharing schemes.
- Short-term implementation: less need for traffic signals. All areas should be fiber enhanced.
- CAV & ITS technology could be as simple as mapping apps that calculate the fastest route based on roadway conditions.
- "New" technology already exists, it's just a matter of what we are willing to deploy.
- CAVs will be used as shuttles/ride share schemes before they are available for purchase in the marketplace.
- Short-term implementation will be related to fiber expansion, ITS cameras, traffic signals, etc. No need for new/special infrastructure to accommodate certain technologies.

How CAV & ITS benefit the transportation system?

- Efficiency: Saving money and time for users.
- Land use change: Fewer parking lots will be needed, cut down on personal vehicles as vehicles will be shared.
- Potential for improved equity, will have to be an intentional act as new technologies are incorporated.
- No need to rely on traffic signs, connected vehicles would get that information online.

Challenges:

- Funding
- Public perception/privacy concerns/political roadblocks: can get resistance from politicians who make decisions on what is funded.
- The transition period when combining human drivers with AVs can be unsafe. Although it was mentioned that there is a lot of research being carried out, it is still unknown how humans and AVs will interact.
- Who controls the cycle of data? Generation,

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aggregation, management: these systems will generate huge amounts of data.

- Power outages, power supply reliability: will affect the entire system that CAVs communicate which relies on data. Autonomy will take some adjusting.
- Regulations will be needed.

CAV & ITS as it relates to safety:

- ITS is about information and creating a better information flow for people who manage systems and who use the roads. ITS technologies are currently available in cars such as automatic braking, blind spot detector and parking assists.
- Need to test more CAVs on the road in heavily-traveled times to get a true test of safety.

CAV & ITS as it relates to environment:

- Congestion relief means less time idling and lower emissions.
- Could shrink road size (less resources used) because human error no longer present.
- EV batteries still use natural resources.

3. Other Discussion Items and Next PSC Meeting

- Jessica McNight will be replacing Cathy Coverston-Anderson from County Health who retired.
- Next meeting: Wednesday August 17th, 2022.

4. Adjourn

Mr. Lai adjourned the meeting at 2:25 p.m.

Meeting 6

Wednesday, August 17, 2022, 2:00 P.M. (In-Person and Virtual)

Room 324, McLean County Health Department

Members Present:

Dan Magee*, IDOT; Bob Nelson*, IDOT; Mike Gebeke*, ISU; Carl Teichman, IWU; Chuck Irwin, District 87; Ryan Otto*, ToN, Kevin Kothe, CoB; David Braun, Connect Transit

Others Present:

Robert Innis*, IDOT; Luke Hohulin*, County Highway; Jacob Smith, Connect Transit; Dr. Andrew Greenly*, Independent Consultant; MCRPC Staff – Raymond Lai, Jennifer Sicks, Gregory Huss, Tessa Ferraro*, Ana Mendoza, Tania Barreto

* Attended Virtually

1. Introduction

Mr. Jacob Smith, the new transportation Planner at Connect Transit introduced himself to the Committee.

Mr. Lai provided a summary of the work carried out during the past month.

- We are in the last few months of the plan development and working on the final draft. The Draft will be put out for public review at the end of August.
- The Plan will also be shared with the Technical and Policy Committees. None of the committees have been involved in the development process, however, they will participate in the final approval process.

2. Project Schedule Update (Ms. Sicks)

Content has been completed of all but two chapters (3 and 6), aspects such as photos and graphs are still being modified.

- Chapter 1: Introduction, it is done, but will be reduced.
- Chapter 2: Existing Conditions, general status of several services provided by different government institutions. Some of the comments from the committee were to add some content, which will be done during the public review period.
- Chapter 3: Foundation of Data, analysis of survey results, demographics information and population projections. Needs to be updated.
- Chapter 4: Focus areas, includes ideas from the survey and comments and suggestions from

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focus groups. Identifies types of projects we can develop to make progress on priority issues.

- Chapter 5: Inventory of the vision goals and objectives and strategies. Goals focus areas are safety, sustainability, resilience, equity and economic impact. Also there is a section of how MCRPC operates related to the goals.
- Chapter 6: Inventory of projects we are planning to develop over the next 28 years. Calculations of project costs based on estimates will be included. This chapter is not ready yet, we have not received information.
- Chapter 7: Implementation, future of transportation, although it is not clear what will happen in the next 30 years. The plan would need to be a guidebook to make the entire system more resilient, sustainable and equitable.
- The Plan will be about 80 -85 pages long. It will be changed to InDesign format, so the final draft will have a different format than the one presented now. The InDesign Document will be used for the public review process.

3. Discussion

Public Survey Summary (Ms. Mendoza):

- The community survey was out between March 23th and June 30th at libraries, MCRPC website and it was advertised in different locations around CoB and ToN. 734 survey responses were received.
- Key findings:
 - Highest priority: repairing and maintaining existing roads; sidewalk installation and improvements; having an extended trail system; safety issues; 60% of respondents want Constitution Trail extended. 56% do not want to see any sparrows (shared routes)
 - Connect transit: 25% respondents use connect transit. 67% would like to see real-time electronic route information
 - People believe roads are safe for driving, however roads are considered less safe for walking or cycling.
 - Problems with roads, they are poorly maintained and have high traffic speeds.
 - Top roads of concern based on safety: Veterans Parkway, College Ave., Empire St., and Hershey Rd. The issue of major concern was poor road maintenance. For Veteran's Parkway the issue of major concern mentioned was infrastructure design.

Population Projections – Preliminary Outcome, Dr. Greenlee (PowerPoint was presented, refer to office file):

- Since 2010 McLean County has had a slower growth rate than in previous years. It is a major shift that needs to be accounted for. Growth rate between 1960 - 2010 was 1,714 people / year and between 2010 -2020 growth reduced to 138 people/year. Growth concentrated in Bloomington and Normal while other towns experienced a population loss.
- Assumptions: overall, it is assumed that what the US looks like now is going to look like in the next 30 years regarding economic stability, no major changes in public policy and freedom of mobility.
- American Community Survey data was used for the projection, as 2020 Census data has not yet been released. Census data will be released in May 2023.
- Population ACS data from 2015 to 2020 shows a slight population loss in McLean County.
- Population projections for 2050 were carried out using three methodologies: Hamilton-Perry, Cohort Component and Cohort Component High Migration.
- Dr. Greenly believes the most probable scenario will be the last (Cohort-Component High Migration) which indicates the population by 2050 in the county will be 165,078 with a low and high range of 149,673 and 181,898 respectively.
- Final takeaways, these projections have greater than usual uncertainty due to decennial census data not yet being available. This data does not yet reflect the recent boom in employment in the County and the high migration to supply for those new work opportunities. The region must continue to account for a growing aging population.

4. Other Discussion Items

No additional discussion items.

5. Next PSC Meeting

Wednesday September 21st, 2022. However, Mr. Lai and Ms. Sicks and other PSC Members might be attending the IDOT Conference.

6. Adjourn

Mr. Lai adjourned the meeting at 3:15 p.m.

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Meeting 7

Tuesday, September 20, 2022, 3:00 P.M. (In-Person and Virtual)
Room 322, McLean County Health Department

Members Present:

Dan Magee, IDOT; Bob Nelson, IDOT; Carl Teichman, IWU; Chuck Irwin, District 87; Jerry Stokes*, County Highway; Ryan Otto*, ToN, David Braun, Connect Transit.

Others Present:

Luke Hohulin*, County Highway; Jacob Smith, Connect Transit; MCRPC Staff – Raymond Lai, Jennifer Sicks, Gregory Huss, Ana Mendoza, Tania Barreto, Anthony Yamzon.

* Attended Virtually

1. Introduction

Mr. Anthony Yamzon, the new Stevenson Fellow at MCRPC introduced himself to the Committee. Mr. Lai provided a summary of the work carried out during the past month.

Project Schedule update:

- We are on schedule; the Draft Plan is out for public review and comments.
- We have received a few comments from the community. Not all comments will be included in the Plan, however all will be considered.
- If PSC members have any comments, let us know by October 17th.

2. Draft Chapter 5 – Goals & Objectives (Ms. Sicks)

- The presentation was prepared so that committee members have a better understanding of goals proposed in the Plan.
- The structure of the Goals was explained, each goal has different objectives, strategies to achieve the goal, tasks, targets and performance metrics to measure the progress.
- There are seven main goals listed in order of priority: Safety, Sustainability, Resiliency, Equity, Economic Impact and Optimized Practices and Operations. Each of the objectives within the goals were presented (Please refer to PPT file).
- Question: Would there be an annual report that includes the progress on each goal? Answer: Yes, we are developing a document to track progress of goals and objectives.

3. Other Discussion Items?

Mr. Lai: last week, MCRPC submitted the SS4A Grant application (related to transportation safety). He thanked committee members for their support during the application process. If MCRPC receives the money, it will be used to expand the Go:Safe Plan. As previously mentioned, Safety is one of the seven goals of the MLRTP 2050.

4. Next PSC Meeting

Next meeting: Wednesday October 19th, 2022. However, Mr. Lai will confirm the date and time.

5. Adjourn

Mr. Lai adjourned the meeting at 4:00 p.m.

Meeting 8

Wednesday, October 18, 2022, 2:00 P.M. (In-Person and Virtual)
Room 322, McLean County Health Department

Members Present:

Dan Magee, IDOT; Bob Nelson, IDOT; Mike Gebeke*, ISU; Carl Teichman, IWU; Chuck Irwin, District 87; Stan Gozur*, Unit District No. 5; Jerry Stokes*, County Highway; Ryan Otto*, ToN, Kevin Kothe, CoB; David Braun, Connect Transit.

Others Present:

Jacob Smith, Connect Transit; Robert Innis*, IDOT; MCRPC Staff – Raymond Lai, Jennifer Sicks, Ana Mendoza, Tania Barreto, Katie McShane, Anthony Yamzon.

* Attended Virtually

1. Introduction

- Mr. Lai mentioned that we are on the final weeks of the Plan's development. If the plan is approved by the Transportation Technical Committee (TAC) and the Transportation Policy Committee, which will be held during the next two weeks, this committee will not need to meet again.
- There will also be a public hearing on Friday, October 21st during the TAC. The hearing will be the last chance for people to make comments/suggestions to the draft plan.
- Mr. Lai thanked for all committee members for their work and comments on the Draft MLRTP 2050 during these past few months.

2. Project Schedule Update

- Mr. Lai noted that the draft plan is an integration of many components e.g. public outreach and engagement, project steering committee, focus groups, data collection and analysis, etc.
- Ms. Sicks further explained the different components of the B-N MLRTP 2050 including:
 - Existing Plans - the State Long Range Transportation Plan, federal documents and previous local municipal plans. Ideas such as safety, resilience and sustainability are part of those plans and main goals of the proposed MLRTP 2050.
 - Data collection and analysis - MCRPC hired an external consultant to do a population growth analysis. Factors such as population growth due to Ferrero and Rivian expanding their plants in Bloomington and Normal were considered.
 - Public outreach and engagement - This was a big part of the plan. Strategies developed to encourage the community to take the survey include:
 - Distributing flyers during public events such as farmers market, parks events. Flyers were also posted at local shops. An effort was made to reach out to several areas of the city to capture the diversity of the local community.
 - The 45 days of the public review period just concluded. We received a few comments that will be included in the Appendices section.
 - Focus Groups and PSC Meeting: Appendices will also include data collected from Focus Groups such as CAV & ITS and Commerce and Freight Focus Groups.
 - Main themes in the entire report have to do with land use which is a common theme mentioned in local plans. The approach for managing development is by emphasizing compact development starting with infill areas and areas within the city and town that have access to services.

Questions by PSC members:

Q. Once the Plan is approved, will there be hard copies distributed to the public? **A.** There will be hard copies at MCRPC, the Bloomington and Normal Libraries. The plan will also be posted on MCRPC's website. No hard copies will be distributed to the public.

Q. Did we get many public comments? There were six comments received. **A.** They were about climate change adaptability, questioning B-N growth area, and someone thanked for the study that will be developed about Veteran's Parkway. We will also see if someone makes a comment on Friday's Public Hearing. If any comments are made, those ideas will be considered and added to the plan.

Q. Is there any mention about e-bikes? **A.** Yes, in the section where we talk about new technologies. There has not been a formal introduction to an e-bike plan by the City or Town. However, people are starting to use them. There was an accident in ISU where a pedestrian was fatally injured by an e-bike. ISU is currently working on an e-bike plan to identify areas where those bikes will be allowed. One of the main problems mentioned by the community is the speed at which they travel. People need to consider that e-bikes are heavier than traditional bikes and in a collision, the potential damage can be higher.

3. Other Discussion Items?

- We have not discussed Electrical Vehicle Takeoff and Landing (EVTOLs) in detail. They would need to be considered on the next plan.
- Mr. Lai mentioned that this planning process started in March 2022, but staff has taken about a year to prepare this process in advance. It has been a team effort by all at MCRPC.
- A committee member acknowledged the work put in this document by staff. It is well thought about and well written. Additionally, it was mentioned that MCRPC did a good job collecting ideas and points of view from different organizations and different members of the community.
- Ms. Sicks reminded committee members to review Chapter 6 of the plan, related to future projects, as that was recently sent out for comments.

4. Next PSC Meeting

As mentioned, if the Plan is approved on the next Transportation and Policy Committee meetings, there will not be further PSC meetings. Mr. Lai will send all members an e-mail to confirm.

5. Adjourn

Mr. Lai adjourned the meeting at 3:00 p.m.

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Focus Group 1. Public Transit

Meeting Notes

Tuesday, April 12, 2022, 3:30 P.M.
In Person and Virtual (Government Center, 115 E. Washington St., MCRPC Office)

Present

David Braun, Connect Transit; Shelly Perry, Connect Transit; Carrie Baily, Connect Transit; Laura Dick *, SHOW BUS

Others Present

MCRPC Staff – Raymond Lai, Jennifer Sicks, Gregory Huss, Ana Mendoza, Tania Barreto, Katie McShane

* Attended Virtually

1. Call to Order

Mr. Lai, called the focus group to order at 3:35 p.m.

2. Attendance

See above

Attendees that were present in person and virtually introduced themselves to the focus group. MCRPC staff also introduced themselves.

3. Meeting Advisories and Ground Rules

Ms. Sicks: participation in the focus group is anonymous. No one will be quoted in the plan and MCRPC will not share specific information with others. A list of the participants from all the focus groups will be included as an Appendix in the plan.

4. Goals for the Group

Ms. Sicks: the objective of the focus group was to obtain formation, challenges and concerns of the services provided by Connect Transit and SHOW BUS. Information collected will be used in the development of the Metropolitan Long Range Transportation Plan (MLRTP) 2050.

5. Overview of services and service areas of public transit options, Connect Transit and SHOW BUS

Connect Transit:

- Connect Transit was created via an intergovernmental agreement in 1972. It is an independent agency governed by a board of trustees appointed by the City of Bloomington and the Town of Normal.
- The system operates a fixed-route service with

39 buses and a connect mobility service with 19 vehicles. The connect mobility service is designed for people with special needs who cannot access the fixed routes.

- There are 15 fixed routes; their service is constrained by the B-N corporate limits. Routes operate at 30 min. intervals on peak hours and at 1-hour intervals during off-peak hours.
- Four electric buses have been ordered and will be delivered soon, eight more will be delivered at the end of 2022 and five more will be delivered in 2023. This means that by 2023 50% of Connect Transit fixed-route buses will be electric. The only constraint mentioned electric buses have, is the range they can achieve. Therefore, routes will be revised and electric buses organized in routes where they can arrive safely to stations to recharge.
- Funding comes from the CoB and ToN among other resources.

SHOW BUS:

- Show Bus was created in 1978 specifically for special population in rural communities of Counties in the central part of IL. It is a non-for profit organization that serves the vulnerable. The system started serving counties of Kankakee, Livingston and McLean and currently it operates in the rural areas of 9 counties: De Witt, Ford, Iroquois, Kankakee, Livingston, Logan, Macon, Mason and Mclean. It is believed to be one of the best systems of such nature in IL.
- The system is funded through grantees
- Show bus offers two types of service: fixed routes and a door-to-door service. Currently because of the driver shortage, all riders need to call to reserve a seat before the ride and services run only if there are reservations. The door-to-door service works in a similar way, by having customers who cannot access the specific fixed-routes make reservations and if they qualify, a bus will pick them up where they need.

6. Concerns and challenges regarding public transit service

Connect Transit:

- The number of Connect Transit users decreased

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during the pandemic, however numbers are now increasing. As of April 2022, the system has on average 300 pass/day compared to 330 pass/day on pre-COVID times

- Funding is not always paid on time by the State of IL

SHOW BUS:

- There is currently a lack of trained drivers, which has resulted in SHOW BUS having to cut back on some routes and to require reservations to run any of the fixed-routes services. New legislation requires drivers to be certified even if they have driven as part of a public transit system before.
- Show Bus did well during COVID, however during the past nine months, the system has lost drivers and staff.

7. Ways to increase service availability

Connect Transit:

Connect Transit is considering a number of projects that have the potential to help increase transit ridership.

- Build a Transit Center in downtown Bloomington, this is in addition to the existing Transit Center in Uptown Normal. Some of the ideas that will be included in the design are having space to hold several buses at a given time, accommodate people with different types of disabilities, and having plenty of natural light and green spaces within the building.
- Approach Rivian about transit services and expand routes to the plant, perhaps at 30 min.

intervals on peak hours.

- Expand routes to neighborhoods that do not have access, focus provision to areas that have higher concentrations of lower income households.
- Sponsor a Van Pool service, for people to drive themselves with others to work and back. Connect Transit is planning to sponsor vans with a capacity of 14 people. The idea is that vans are used by population living in areas where connect transit does not serve. To get a van to travel to work, people will have to submit their interest.
- A new project of trunk lines and feeder buses is being considered. The objective is to have a fast bus services running on specific routes across the B-N corporate limits and have other smaller buses feeding into the faster routes. The faster buses will run mostly through main streets where they can achieve higher speeds and the feeder lines will run through neighborhoods collecting passengers to connect them with the faster service.

SHOW BUS:

- Still in process

8. Summary

Participants were made aware of the survey and they were asked to support the MCRPC by helping distribute it to the community.

9. Adjourn

Mr. Lai adjourned the focus group at 5:00 p.m.

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Focus Group 2. Health and Social Services

Meeting Notes

Wednesday, April 13, 2022, 2:00 P.M.
In Person and Virtual (Government Center, 115 E. Washington St., MCRPC Office)

Present

Sheila Greuel*, East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging Community Liaison Consultant; Betsy Kurtenback*, Advocates for the Disabled Community; Carrie Bailey*, Connect Transit; Shelly Perry*, Connect Transit; Conan Calhoun*, Life Center for Independent Living; Sally, Gambacorta*, Carle BroMenn Medical Center; Laura Dick*, SHOW BUS; Holly Philips*, Homes of Hope; Cathy Coverston-Anderson, McLean County Health Department; Erin Kennedy, OSL Health Care Medical Center.

Others Present

MCRPC Staff – Raymond Lai, Jennifer Sicks, Gregory Huss, Ana Mendoza, Tania Barreto, Katie McShane

* Attended Virtually

1. Call to Order

Ms. Sicks, the Senior Transportation Planner at MCRPC, called the focus group to order at 2:05 p.m.

2. Attendance

See above. Attendees that were present in person and virtually introduced themselves to the focus group. MCRPC staff also introduced themselves.

3. Meeting Advisories and Ground Rules

Ms. Sicks: participation in the focus group is anonymous. No one will be quoted in the plan and MCRPC will not share specific information with others. A list of the participants from all the focus groups will be included as an Appendix in the plan.

4. Goals for the Group

Ms. Sicks talked about our transportation system's Vision and explained participants they were going to be asked a series of questions to identify where gaps are and possible solutions to improve transportation to access health care and to a healthy living. Responses are to be based on their experience and their unique perspectives from their places of work. Information will be used in the development of the Metropolitan Long Range Transportation Plan (MLRTP) 2050.

5. Gaps Barriers and Constraints

Set of Questions:

- Are these gaps due to lack of accessible options?
- Are there gaps that primarily impact people with limited incomes?
- Potential public-private arrangements that could resolve access limits?
- How can institutions & providers collaborate to broaden transportation options?

Comments:

- Multifactorial such as limited access to accessible vehicles
- Education, in the sense of the community being aware of all the options for transportation available to them.
- Income is a factor preventing people using the systems available. During the pandemic people were not charged to use the bus, so a way to identify if income is a deterrent would be to analyze if there was an increase in ridership during that time.
- Difficulty in offering accessible transport, an example was given of a local taxi company, the owner invested in a bus to transport people with special needs. However, because the bus consumes more gasoline than other vehicles, drivers were reluctant to use it because they are required to pay for the gas they consume. In the end, the company owner gave up the bus and that company no longer offered the service.
- It is difficult to get accessible transportation i.e. when patients are being discharged from hospitals at hours when existing public transport options are not available.
- By having finance to operate an accessible van or bus. Also, having drivers qualified to run it.
- Having a Central Hub, the lack of knowledge about services provided can be a "customer service issue". Accessible vehicles are strongly needed starting from paratransit to 88 accessible vans. However, everything is in an extreme silo effect: sometimes people need a service and when calling a specific organization, they would only mention they don't offer the service, but the company does not usually

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direct the client to an organization that does offer the required service.

- Idea: have a central hub where people can call, identify their specific needs so they can be directed to the service that best works for them. Instead of having people calling several different organizations, information about all services will be together in one hub and it will serve all people, not only those with disabilities. This hub will also serve to identify the needs of the services offered, for example, having a clear understanding of all the options available in one zone, the need to increase the number of a specific service such as accessible vans or buses in a specific area. The idea is to organize at a regional level, such as the region of McLean County rather than at a State level.
- Having frequent buses running during the day: a reason why people are not riding buses can be related to the timing of transportation service and people's independence. Basically, people want to be able to travel at the time they want and that is not the case with buses. Timing is also important because some people have special needs such as hours in which to eat, or to take their medicine and bus times do not always align with customers' requirements. The idea given is to re-think the type of services provided. As an example: Coles County's ZIP Line route was mentioned. The service is constantly running every hour from 8am to 5pm every day. Consequently, people have more options to take the bus at a time that is more convenient. A similar service could be applied to the rural areas.

6. Supportive Transportation

Set of Questions:

Describe the general characteristics of people you serve or represent who need more supportive options...

- A. Due to physical constraints
- B. Due to cognitive constraints
- C. Due to mental health challenges
- D. Due to limited incomes or limited time

Comments:

- Making guides accessible to all regardless of the disability, i.e.: people who cannot read have the option of getting to the information through voice recognition.
- Connect mobility App: Colors are good for

people that have disabilities. For people that cannot read the information, it does have a voice recognition mode.

- Education: there was a program run by Connect Transit called "Connect U", it worked as a class for people on how to ride a bus and it was designed to educate people on their fixed routes and connect mobility services. Depending on the type of customers that were getting the class, explanations were given related to the fixed-route or the connect transit service. Connect Transit is re-launching the program as it was stopped during the pandemic.

7. Making Options Known

Set of Questions:

- A. How can we improve the distribution of information regarding existing services and their options?
- B. Is there a role for a community-wide resource that can guide transportation seekers to their best options, based on their specific needs?
- C. How can the health and social services community assist transit providers in expanding their services and/or service areas? (Who is not being served)

Comments:

- Having one guide where all services available to the community are included, the idea is to include information about all services in the "Connect Transit Riders Guide". Instead of having information only about Connect transit services, include information about SHOW BUS and other services. These "Riders Guides" can be distributed printed and online. Additionally, consideration would need to be given to making the guide accessible to all regardless of the disability, i.e.: people who cannot read.
- Grocery stores could offer free delivery to communities in need: such as what was done during COVID
- Mobile fruit and vegetable store: a mobile unit of grocery store can be put together so that it goes around the community, specially to places that do not have easy access to a store.
- Involve bus services in the delivery of things like groceries: buses that are running their normal routes could be used to deliver groceries to people that cannot access the stores, delivery could be done at bus stops. There would be

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no money exchange required between grocery stores and the bus service. It worked well during covid and Focus Group participants mentioned that they do not recall having major issues with the service. However FTA asked for the service to be stopped from January 2022.

- Bus service delivering meals: In another example, participants mentioned that rural public transportation collaborated with meals on wheels to deliver meals. However, there are now a list of standard companies doing the deliveries need to comply with, that make it impossible to continue with the service.
- Eliminating bus fares: Rural transportation could have no fares. Revenue from fares is very low anyway. So with advocacy, perhaps the state government can accept not charging.
- Having strong advocacy: important to help organize these types of services. Several of the above mentioned programs started during COVID and sometimes things that start during an emergency can have a continuity. It is a matter of people organizing to advocate for special services.

8. Additional Ideas

- Complaints and suggestions from the community for transportation service providers: expansion of operating hours, better way to call for a ride, expand services out of town, accessibility of the service, affordability of the service, types of trip needed, medical outside the county, employment, social service appointments and social engagements. Having on-demand service either curb or curb or door-

to-door.

Needed timeframes:

- Weekdays: 7am to 5pm; 5pm to 10pm and after 10pm
- Weekends: 7am to 5pm; 5pm to 10pm and after 10pm
- The pandemic showed us that things can be done: several services were put in place during the pandemic which demonstrates that there is the capacity and the budget to carry them out. There needs to be a system change and priority given to serve those in need. Changes have to go through the Feds and a way to get to them can be through the Administration of Community Living (ACL) if looking at populations with disabilities. Another agency that can be involved is the DOT.

9. Summary and Final Remarks

- Participants were made aware of the survey and they were asked to support the MCRPC by helping distribute it to the community.
- Ms. Sicks will send a PDF of the survey in the three different languages to all participants in this Focus Group.
- Everyone in this group will be invited to the next Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) Meeting (held on the 2nd Wednesday of every month at 2:00pm).

10. Adjourn

Ms. Sicks adjourned the focus group at 3:40 p.m.

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Focus Group 3. Pedestrian and Bicycle

Meeting Notes

Wednesday, May 11, 2022, 10 A.M.
In Person and Virtual (Government Center, 115 E.
Washington St., Room 404)

Present

Patrick Dullard, Friends of Constitution Trail;
Kenneth Bays, CoB Police; Matt Lane, McLean
County Sheriff's Office; Mercy Davison, ToN; Ryan
Otto, ToN; Liam Owens, ToN; Caitlin Kelly, ToN;
Kevin Kothe, CoB; Philip Dick, McLean County;
Kellie Williams, McLean County Wheelers; Aaron
Woodruff, ISU Police; Shane Hill, McLean County
Unit District No. 5; Brian West*, McLean County
Highway Department; Kevin McCarthy*, Lake Run
Club; Robert Moews*, CoB Parks; Derri Kerrick*,
CoB Parks; Shane Hackman, ToN Police; Brian
Evans*, Bloomington Public Schools District 87.

Others Present

MCRPC Staff – Raymond Lai, Jennifer Sicks, Gregory
Huss, Ana Mendoza, Tania Barreto, Katie McShane

Representatives of companies invited, but not present

McLean County Parks, ToN Parks, Bike BloNo

* Attended Virtually

1. Introduction:

All attendees introduced themselves.

2. Meeting Advisories and Ground Rules:

Ms. Sicks explained that participation in the focus group is anonymous. No one will be quoted in the plan and MCRPC will not share specific information with others. A list of the participants from all the focus groups will be included as an Appendix in the plan.

3. Goals for the Group:

Ms. Sicks explained our transportation system's vision and explained to participants they were going to be asked a series of questions to identify where gaps are and possible solutions. Responses are to be based on their experience and their unique perspectives. Information collected will be used in the development of the Metropolitan Long Range Transportation Plan (MLRTP) 2050.

4. Good/Bad Locations for Pedestrians and Bike Users

a. Identify locations that you think are dangerous for pedestrians and bike users:

- Veterans Parkway, crossing and being there. It is a little better when there are cross-walks and refuge islands for pedestrians.
- Empire St. is also difficult to cross.
- Crossing Main St. is a challenge, specifically to the west side
- College Ave. corridor through campus.
- 95% of bicycle users think streets in B-N are dangerous, users are afraid to cycle
- We do not have enough bike lanes and they are not always connecting
- A painted stripe as a bike lane is still considered dangerous by most users.
- Successful bike lanes are those that have a physical separation with the main traffic lane.
- There needs to be education to drivers but the vulnerability of cyclists and pedestrians is that cars are too close. Although having a bike lane is better than nothing.

b. Identify locations for pedestrians and bike users where accommodation for these modes is successful and should be applied to other locations:

- Constitution Trail when crossing Empire St. or when crossing the less busy streets.
- Improvements on Front St.: Incorporating traffic calming strategies such as stop signs and refuge islands for pedestrians gave good results.
- Bike lanes from Hudson to B-N are a blessing! It would be useful if the bike lanes are extended north to the Lakes, so people can do long rides.
- Rivian Parkway has a wide shoulder to ride on, it is almost like a bike lane.
- Uptown Circle: it used to be a freeflow traffic intersection. Now the circle helps slow cars down so that pedestrians and cyclists have a chance to cross.
- Underpass to cross Veterans Parkway along Constitution Trail (between General Electric Rd. and Jumer Dr.), there are hundreds of pedestrians and cyclists that use it every day.

c. What/which locations would deem highest priority to increase active transportation safety?

- Road conditions do make a difference when cycling i.e. pot holes, roads being icy
- Anywhere where we can find places for trails. The safest places for bikes and peds are far from cars.
- Morrissey Dr. north of Veterans Pkwy: IDOT has in their multi-year plan to do something in that stretch. There needs to be bike accommodation for people to ride to and from jobs, not just for recreational purposes. Proper advocacy with IDOT would be required so that that road is designed properly.
- Veterans Parkway and Empire St. There are people that walk along Empire St and cross Veterans Pkwy even though there is no infrastructure to do so.
- IDOT is proposing phase 1 for the Route 9 Improvement Plan. The Plan includes a side path on northern-side of Empire St. to cross Veterans Pkwy. However, it will be a few years before it gets done.
- Main St. and College St. in Normal. There are thousands of students crossing the intersection every day.
- DOT is currently working on Main St. We should be more vocal and say we have a large vested interest in this project.

d. What would you rate overall the pedestrian and bicycle network and why?

- It is difficult to give one rating as roads are different. i.e. the older part of town is more pedestrian friendly and connected than the new part.
- Neighborhoodwise the network is 'well connected', problems arise when connecting at larger scales: i.e. between neighborhoods or regionally as connections do not exist. Perhaps because those parts grew during the post-war era.
- Having accessibility around the City or Town by trails would make people feel safe and encourage them to use alternative transport modes. Otherwise, driving becomes the preferred option.
- Downtown and Uptown are walkable, but not many other areas. Connecting the trails will be useful for people to get around town.
- Bike infrastructure is better than pedestrian infrastructure. Pedestrian infrastructure tends to disappear. Sometimes, although distances are short, the fact that there are no-pedestrian

- sidewalks prevents people from walking.
- The City of Bloomington has a sidewalk masterplan, they are working on implementation however, it will take several years to complete. Additionally, sidewalks are constantly changing and need to be upgraded. **A1**
- The Town of Normal has a sidewalks rating project. The project should be completed by the end of the summer. Sidewalks will be rated for ADA compliances. **A2**
- Everyone pays attention to trails, we should think about wheelchair access.

5. How Do We Support Walking and Bike Use as Transportation Alternatives?

a. How do you feel about the ability to walk/bike/roll safely in B-N now and what can be done in the future to mitigate any safety concerns you might have?

- Changing of behavior of drivers, cyclists and pedestrians. **A3**
- Educating the community to use crossing appropriately and drivers to stop or slow down when approaching pedestrians or bikes. **A4**
- Low speed areas even without bike lanes feel safer than high speed roads
- The ToN has incorporated a few traffic calming options that have worked well and in general help bring car speeds down. i.e. curb extensions, refugee islands. **A5**
- Recently did Gregory St., striped some parking, since the striping went down, there are no complaints from residents.
- Sharrows were incorporated in Constitution Trail crossings. They seem to be making an impact as cars and bikes are slowing down. **A6**
- The uncertainty of having to stop or not makes cars, pedestrians and bikes stop or slow down at intersections.
- ToN continues to identify road diet alternatives; a common option is traffic bumps.
- Not all streets have the option to incorporate traffic calming options such as refugee islands because of their high traffic volumes. It is particularly difficult when having 4-lane roads. **A7**
- There is hesitancy on having stop signs for cars as they do not always stop and pedestrians may have a false sense of safety.
- The City and Town have low car speeds. This is a good characteristic that should be maintained. **A8**
- Signs should be put on Constitution Trail for bikes and pedestrians to slow down/stop at

intersections.

- Yield to pedestrians signs cannot be put on Constitution Trail street crossings because it is not State Law.
- Tactical Urbanism: can be a way to incorporate and test a few safety solutions using removable objects such as cones and paint.
- CoB used Tactical Urbanism principles during the Front St. renovation as a way to demonstrate people how the changes will affect the road.
- MCRPC has recently applied to two grants. If the grant is approved, CoB and ToN will be contacted to help incorporate traffic calming pop-up options.
- Connect Transit: sidewalks need to be incorporated, complementing stops.

b. How can we better provide pedestrian/bike access to all?

- Consider the top ten employers and ask: Are there safe routes for pedestrians and bikes to get to those destinations from all areas of the city?. Think about where people are coming from and where they need to go.
- Important to think about connectivity between transport modes when planning and encourage multimodal transportation.
- Final connections are also important, i.e. access paths from the public infrastructure (sidewalk) to buildings, providing bicycle parking. Lack of access paths is problematic for people with mobility issues.
- Bike and Pedestrian groups recognize the CoB and ToN are good partners to work with. Issues the City and Town face are lack of time and money.
- There are plans to build up the pedestrian and bike network but it will take years to complete.
- We could use Tactical Urbanism ideas to start testing ideas. Projects, such as spots that are difficult to cross could be identified and safety measures implemented.
- There is a grant program for safe streets. MCRPC will consider applying as soon as the NOFO becomes available.

c. How can we encourage people to walk and use their bicycles more?

- "Bike/Pedestrian Day": similar to Bogota, Colombia, a few streets could be shut down on Sundays for bike & ped use only. The idea would be to create a network from Uptown to

Downtown to promote cycling and walking. Bell St., University St. or Main St. in Downtown could be used. The project could start one Sunday every month and then increase to every Sunday if possible.

- Teaching people how to ride bikes: kids and adults. There are organizations that can train people how to ride bikes. Hand out lights for bikes.
- Bike donation program: there is a bike coop program, where bikes are donated and can be bought at low cost.
- Bike share program: there was one in the ToN however; the business is not there anymore. This is good to have for tourists, as bikes tend to be too heavy for everyday use. They need to be durable for people to use every day.
- E-scooters and e-bikes: we need to keep up with technology developments. People that were not able to ride might have a chance now.

6. The Impact of Infrastructure Condition and Utility

a. What is the Public opinion Regarding on-street bicycle lanes? Should we be creating a bike lane network encompassing Bloomington and Normal? Already discussed in previous sections.

b. Are there intersection/crosswalk design options for which there is evidence of improved safety for pedestrians?

- Offering longer walking times at intersections. Improving intersection/crosswalk design options, implementing refuge islands.
- Including scramble crossings: allow for diagonal crossing. People are more likely to wait for their turn to cross when they have the option to cross in any direction. There are a couple of those one of those in Bloomington.
- No right turn on red can be helpful, can be safer in the right conditions.
- There are several no right turn on red in streets close to schools and in streets where there were crashes.
- Having a crosswalk that is actually a speed bump. It will encourage drivers to slow down.
- Leading pedestrian interval: having traffic light that give cyclists and pedestrians a head start over cars when crossing the street.

c. How can we address pedestrian safety in rural areas?

- Widening the roads or the shoulders– people know they have to be more careful because cars tend to drive at higher speeds on rural areas.
- It is generally more dangerous for bikes and pedestrians than in urban areas. Trails can be the solution.
- Township commissioners are not good partners to work with. If they do nothing to improve conditions for cyclists or pedestrians, then they have immunity. So, they prefer to do nothing.
- It would be good to find a way to change their attitudes.
- An extension to Route 66 is being built – people will have a touristy trail.
- Pedestrians also play a role in their safety. They should be reminded that they need to be aware and not cross while on their phones.

d. What types of crosswalks/infrastructure/etc. is preferred for pedestrians?

e. What types of lanes/infrastructure/etc. is preferred for cyclists? Inexperienced cyclists?

- Both already discussed in previous sections.

7. How can we mitigate human error?

a. Can infrastructure effectively mitigate human failure?

- Telematics: Technology is more and more being used to grade people’s driving attitudes. i.e. phone usage, speed when turning at intersections, how much people are obeying speed limits, etc.
- Cars technology development: car manufacturers also want less crashes and are trying to pick up problems when driving.
- Autonomous vehicles manufacturers: cars should be able to identify a bicycle. They are in their infancy in technology.
- Invest in infrastructure: however that can years as infrastructure lasts decades, it is not like a car that lasts a few years. Trying to get infrastructure up with technology development may not me as feasible. It will implicate huge costs and will take decades.
- Cycling technology: it is also developing, bike devices will alert the cyclist of an approaching car before the cyclist can see it.

b. What steps are needed to educate users about atypical traffic controls, such as the mid-crosswalk sign at Constitution Trail and Mulberry Street in Normal?

- Already discussed in previous sections.

c. Is there an evaluation process for such locations?

- Evaluations are carried out as per request.
- Normally evaluations are done by observing. Staff or technicians go out, observe and periodically evaluate warrants for different traffic control requests or areas that have seen traffic increase. Evaluations are frequently done for various areas traffic, pedestrian and bicycle use.

8. SWOT Analysis

Strengths:

- Constitution Trail – safe for bicycles and pedestrians
- Community and government support
- Interagency collaboration
- Local agencies have a great relationship with IDOT and other granting agencies
- Complete Streets Ordinances
- The area is flat which makes it easier for cyclists and pedestrians to walk/cycle
- Planning documents from Bloomington and Normal

Weaknesses:

- Veterans Parkway cuts along entire community
- Funding and manpower challenges
- Having so many state roads (adaptations/ changes cannot be decided locally)
- We do not have a strong biking culture nor public awareness of bicycle safety. However, we do not have a culture of people hating bikes either.
- Lack of options to cycle/walk. Gaps in network
- Extreme weather conditions / difficult to cycle/ walk in winter/summer months.
- High vehicle dependency, difficult to change people’s behavior
- Rural transportation networks are not safe
- Types of vehicles circulating on rural roads (large farm equipment) can be dangerous

Opportunities:

- A lot more Federal and State grants will be available for the next five years.
- High gas prices, people could be encouraged to

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use alternative modes of transport.

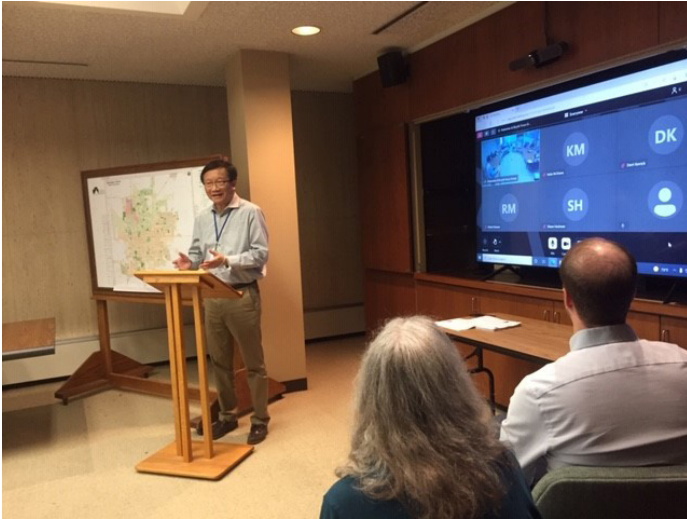
- There is an influx of people coming to work in new companies (Rivian, Ferrero), that can be expecting to bike.
- Opportunity to educate students
- We have supportive large employers
- Small business and promotions collaboration
- Alternative funding strategies where you can get money in addition to grants
- Ongoing and future studies
- ISU with their large student population can help a lot in adopting ped&bike safety measures.

Threats

- Politics, not only local politics but different political issues.
- Political prioritization and resource constraints
- Inflation
- Cars getting bigger and heavier, threat to safety and to the environment
- Cars being quieter

9. Adjourn

Ms. Sicks adjourned the focus group at 12:05 p.m.



Photos: Pedestrian and Bicycle Focus Group Meeting



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Focus Group 4. Commerce and Freight

Meeting Notes

Wednesday, June 8, 2022, 8 A.M.
In Person and Virtual (CIRA Airport)

Representatives of companies present

Rusty Rich, State Farm; Stan Wilhoit*, State Farm; Arin Rader, McLean County Farm Bureau; Nick Duffle, BN Economic Development Council; Scott Kear, Rivian; Zach Dietmeier, Rivian; Justin Otto, Evergreen FS; Steve Kusch, Growmark; Chris Aranda, Nussbaum Transportation; Carl Olson, BN Airport Authority; Javier Centeno, BN Airport Authority; Carl Teichman, IWU; Laura Stollard*, Prairie Central Co-op; Erin Kennedy*, OSF Medical Center; Becky Richards*, OSF Medical Center; Cindy Hauk*, Carle BroMenn Medical Center.

Others Present

MCRPC Staff – Raymond Lai, Jennifer Sicks, Gregory Huss, Tania Barreto, Tessa Ferraro, Cassidy Kraimer; Ana Mendoza, Katie McShane.

Representatives of companies invited, but not present

Nu-Way Transportation; SAIA; LTL Freight and Shipping Logistics; Estes Express Lines; FedEx Shipping; Norfolk Southern Railway, Union Pacific Railroad; McLean County Chamber of Commerce; Illinois Trucking Association, Brandt Industries; Bridgestone/Fire Stone B-N Manufacturing Facilities, Ferrero USA; Destihl Breweries, Zentech; The Garlic Press, Medici Restaurant; Jewel Osco (Albertstons Companies); Lowes Home Improvement; Common Ground Grocery; Lupita's Hispanic & American Grocery; Sugar Mama Bakery; Namaste Plaza; Carniceria Mexicana.

* Attended Virtually

1. Introduction:

Mr. Lai started the meeting at 8:05 AM. The main points mentioned were:

- The importance of Focus Groups. To collect information from the community in issues affecting them and their businesses.
- The need to see freight transportation as part of a larger transportation system.
- Importance of upgrading the LRTP 2045 to a newer version. The plan is used on a variety of occasions, i.e. when deciding on which projects

to pursue and to apply for grants.

- Representatives of all companies invited will receive a follow-up e-mail with the community survey for them to complete, share in their work place and people they know; and the same questions that were asked during the Focus Group, so representatives can make additional comments.

All attendees introduced themselves.

2. Meeting Advisories and Ground Rules:

Participation in the focus group is anonymous. Pictures were taken and the meeting was recorded. However, no one will be quoted in the plan and MCRPC will not share specific information with others. A list of the participants from all the focus groups will be included as an Appendix in the plan.

3. Goals for the Group:

To identify where gaps are and possible solutions related to commerce and freight transportation in McLean County. Responses were to be based on their experience and their unique perspectives.

4. SWOT Analysis

Questions to be considered:

Commerce, business activity and freight transportation. Does the transportation system support their businesses?

Strengths

- Highway Systems
- Geographic location
- Airport access
- Rail access
- Trail System – thinking of bicycles

Weaknesses

- Warehousing, there is nowhere to store goods once you bring them here
- Fuel Station exits
- Hospital patient transport
- Safety, there are roads in north Normal with a lot of truck traffic going to a warehouse (Rivian warehouse?)
- We should start to change our planning focus to larger logistics, there is not enough focus on bringing large shipments
- Efficient East-West vehicle access

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- Drainage issues – having all weather roads
- Electric car charging stations
- No ability to bring containers directly from ports by rail. Mostly coming from Chicago
- Need to have wider shoulders on country roads for farming equipment, city sprawl to rural areas.
- Low bridge heights and wires. They are getting closer to trucks
- Lack of safety to access warehouses, lots of trucks accessing
- Truck traffic passing through residential zones in north Normal and in Towanda. In Towanda truck pass through the central park which is dangerous for kids.

Opportunities

- Technology – Electric Vehicles
- Autonomous vehicles, aircrafts
- Access to Rivian: it is difficult to get from I-55 over to Rivian Motorway and vice versa. It is easier to get from I-55 to I-74
- Smart Roads
- Lack of an inland intermodal facility – a truck and rail, multi user facility that could tie up with the Decatur facility.

Threats

- Road maintenance
- Competition from competing communities, if we don't develop something, some other community might and take our business
- Reputation of the State
- New or outdated regulations
- Infrastructure as a whole, new technologies
- Outdated buildings. Building environment not accommodating for existing needs

5. Small Group Sessions

a. Freight Group Discussion

Attendees: Stan Wilhoit*, State Farm; Arin Rader, McLean County Farm Bureau; Scott Kear, Rivian; Justin Otto, Evergreen FS; Steve Kusch, Growmark; Chris Aranda, Nussbaum Transportation; Carl Olson, BN Airport Authority; Laura Stollard*, Prairie Central Co-op; Erin Kennedy*, OSF Medical Center; Becky Richards*, OSF Medical Center; Cindy Hauk*, Carle BroMenn Medical Center.

1. How do people access your business? & 2. How do you transport goods to/from your business?

- Nussbaum Trucking is located on the north side of town. Trucks use the highway system from

the area.

- Elevators, they have several locations: some have year-round access but others such as Leroy or Arrowsmith, access can be only from the south which triples travel time.



Photo: Freight Group Session

- Airport passengers, regional customers arrive from interstates. A problem as people have to drive through municipal roads once out of the freeway. Those coming from Champaign go through Downs.
- Airport Cargo: Single largest employer is FedEx. FedEx has a Distribution Center at CIRA, they have 53-foot traffic trailers go to south Peru, Peoria and Champaign.
- Trailers have to go through the city to get up to the interstates because there is no interstate access from the east side of town. This works for the trucks but it is not ideal for the community. Trucks leave early in the morning and come back in the evening, 25-30 trucks a day, plus 6 tractor-trailers (10-12 during the holidays).
- Rivian has a warehouse in north Normal, they use Main St. to access it, a traffic concern they are aware of.
- Charters arrive every day and it is difficult to get from the east to the west side. To get to Rivian from the Airport, they use Veterans Parkway. The problem is that they pass a couple of schools.
- Rivian looked into driving through Towanda to avoid going through B-N, however, they need to pass through the center of Towanda and it takes longer.
- Truck stops and parking, question if current stations are big enough to handle the influx of trucks.

- Lack of east-west highway and interstate access to the airport. Trucks have to go through the city using local roads.
- A possible solution is to have access to Rt. 55 in Towanda without having to pass through the village. This will improve safety and be less expensive than other options.
- Truck-route map, can provide some guidance with safety around school zones. CoB and ToN should be encouraged to develop one.
- Growmark, most products parcels moved in trucks periodically. Operations are truck-in and truck-out.
- Rivian: All modes, truck in + out, rail in + out, parcels in and out and air daily.

2. What are some transportation issues you would like to see addressed?

- Roads and associated infrastructure
- Having wider shoulders to provide for farming equipment and safety for bicycles.
- East-West routes – connections to I-55
- There is no way around Towanda
- Rail-truck interconnection terminal. Given our geographic location and that we are the second population concentration in the state after Chicago. Logistics and distribution activities are a big opportunity for existing and new companies. Highway and rail access should be incorporated into one facility.
- CIRA and the EDC are doing a study on cold storage for perishable items such as flowers, vegetables, pharmaceuticals. There is an opportunity to develop an intermodal facility.
- Truck parking is problematic during the evenings.
- There is one travel facility coming to the community. One off Marcus St. in Normal. Another on Main and I-55.
- Safety reinforcement. No texting while driving should be enforced to all highway users, not only truck drivers.
- Lack of warehouse space

3. With transportation in mind, what would make your business more efficient? &

4. What are your present/possible transportation safety hazard concerns with your business?

- Truck parking,
- Accessibility to taxis and Uber

5. In what ways do you expect technology to alter the ways your business operates?

- Autonomous trucks are new but finding a space in the system. By 2050 we will see these technologies being used in the Midwest.
- Having electric car charging facilities built into the road system would be ideal. However, very expensive (\$1.2 million per mile)
- eVTOL (Electric Vehicle Take Off and Landing). A new carbon fiber electric aircraft that uses electrical power to fly. Two important applications. 1) Urban Air Mobility, considered the future of Uber, Lyft and car-sharing schemes in big communities (can fit four people). 2) Air Freight transportation, eVTOLs can carry up to two pallets. Operation will start with a flight crew but in the future they will be autonomous. eVTOLs can fly for up to one hour, and trips that take one-hour in a truck can take only 12 minutes in an eVTOL. The system is already here, and companies such as US and United Airlines have purchased several hundreds to be tested.
- Electric trucks have a 150 miles range.
- Farm equipment: large concern of speeding in rural areas.
- Trucks safety, ensuring passenger cars comply with road regulations.
- Aircrafts are getting bigger, companies will rather fly a large aircraft than several small ones. In the future, each cargo aircraft will generate more truck traffic than currently.
- Overall McLean County's location is good to carry out freight activities. It is close to Chicago and to St. Louis and in the center of the state. We need to exploit those characteristics.

b. Commerce Group Discussion

Attendees: Rusty Rich, State Farm; Nik Duffle, BN EDC; Zach Dietmeier, Rivian; Carl Teichman, Illinois Wesleyan/MCRPC



Photo: Commerce Group Discussion

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1. *How do people access your business?*

- Interstate (University students)
- Local road network (employees, special events at university) (Road maintenance is important)
- Some bike and pedestrian access, but it is limited. Want to encourage more biking and walking
- Constitution trail. Needs better access from Illinois Wesleyan University and other businesses. Great resource but doesn't connect to all the necessary places in community
- Extending Connect Transit lines. 50% of Rivian employees live in Bloomington/Normal. New line received well
- Internal shuttles and shuttles from other communities. COVID-19 has changed and reduced the use of shuttles for some businesses
- Amtrak and airport use have increased
- Businesses could benefit from uptown and downtown being better connected

2. *How do you transport goods to/from your business?*

- Businesses ask how to get to interstate from local road network. Important in attracting new businesses to the area
- There is a lack of rail to directly connect businesses to their goods
- Without adequate rail you have to rely more on trucking
- It is important to consider multifaceted outputs coming from one business and the unique needs of each of those outputs
- Infrastructure that exists, such as rail spur, should be extended to meet the needs of inputs/outputs
- Shortening supply chain

3. *What are some transportation improvements you would like to see addressed?*

- Build out of mass transit
- Connect Transit lines often take 30 minutes for an individual to travel, ideally this should be 15 minutes
- The shuttle services that some employers provide are ending because employees are working from home
- Shuttle services come with extensive upfront and operating costs
- Parking standards and current zoning ordinances have overbuilt parking for commercial/retail
- Electric charging stations (5% of new vehicles

- purchased last year were electric)
- Desire for e-bikes and shared bicycles

4. *With transportation in mind, what would make your business more efficient?*

- Reliability of Connect Transit is good, but no second options for residents if transit fails
- Connect transit could have more frequent routes
- The impact of weather on transportation safety. Wind, rapid weather shifts in the winter, ice, super cold temperatures.
- Roads must be clear, healthcare can't stop because of bad weather. Roadways built with intention for future use and development
- How can roads support the long-term development of commerce in the urbanized area, these are needs that are 15+ years down the line that are difficult to anticipate
- Pipelines need to be in place because that greatly impacts new business growth

5. *What are your present/possible transportation Safety hazard concerns with your business?*

- General conditions of roads – funds are limited, weather has impacted quality of roads
- Paint on roads must be maintained
- Roundabout. The community and residents are not familiar with them but could be great solution in certain areas
- Yellow and red light runners
- Pedestrians “frogging” and misjudging driver speed or cars are speeding
- Common for State Farm employees to cross Veterans at lunch to access restaurants
- Lack of clearly marked pedestrian crossings (especially along Veterans Parkway)
- Lack of biking accommodations (especially along Veterans Parkway)
- Veterans Parkway function was initially as a bypass, its function has changed since then
- The bike trail along Route 66 needs a barrier near Towanda
- New technology/infrastructure/etc is scary and people may be at risk

6. *In what ways do you expect technology to alter the ways your business operates?*

- Gas prices will likely drive consumers to EVs
- Freight will likely transition to EVs and autonomous vehicles sooner than consumers
- Supply shortage won't last forever, people who buy new technology for transport will no longer

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be considered “early adopters”

- Telehealth will see an increase
- 5G will change transportation infrastructure

6. Summary and Wrap up

Main ideas discussed:

- Having multiple options for transportation is important, currently we mostly rely on personal vehicles to access work, businesses.
- There is not much focus on walking, biking and taking transit, should be more available.
- For freight, more emphasis should be put on rail transportation. There is a heavy reliance in trucks because rail is not as efficient.
- Speed is a serious weakness of rail transport.
- How quickly can you develop and adjust rail infrastructure to current and future needs when we sometimes do not know what they will be.
- Reliability of Connect Transit, people should be able to get from one point to another in the city as quickly as possible.
- Having an Intermodal Facility in town
- Roads are built looking backwards. They are usually built based on past requirements not always looking at the future.
- Parking is not a big concern for small

businesses. Yet, the number of parking spots needed for shops is based on old requirements with a driving mentality.

- We would need electric charging stations in the future. They could take advantage of the parking areas.
- General conditions of roadways, upkeep and maintenance though all weather conditions.
- Need to eliminate trucks circulating in local areas. Lack of highway connectivity from East to West forces trucks to circulate through the city.
- Safety issues of trucks & farm equipment circulating on roads.
- Technology is tricky to talk about because it is difficult to predict its development and future needs.
- The eVTOL air transportat option will have two commercial operations. As urban taxis and for airfreight, for last mile deliveries.
- eVTOLs are in the market now, they are being tested and going through safety standard certifications.

7. Adjourn

Mr. Lai adjourned the focus group at 10:15 AM

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Photos: Freight and Commerce Focus Group Meeting

Focus Group 5. CAV & ITS

Meeting Notes

Wednesday, June 29, 2022, 8:30 A.M.
In Person (Government Center, 115 E. Washington St., Room 404) and Virtual

Representatives of companies present

Melissa Miles, State Farm; Jon Hull, State Farm; Yanfeng Onyang, University of Illinois, Gary Sims, IDOT District 5; Luke Houlin, McLean County Highways; Wayne Hopper, Town of Normal; Phil Allyn, City of Bloomington; Isaac Chany, Illinois State University; Kevin Kothe, City of Bloomington, Jerry Quandt, Mobility Illinois (Illinois Autonomous Vehicles Association, ILAVA); Terry Heffron*, IDOT; Bob Innis*, IDOT; Michael Vanderhoof*, IDOT.

Others Present

MCRPC Staff – Raymond Lai, Jennifer Sicks, Gregory Huss, Ana Mendoza, Tania Barreto, Cassidy Kraimer.

Representatives of companies invited, but not present

Caterpillar, John Deere, Honeywell and Rivian.

* Attended Virtually

1. Introduction:

Mr. Lai started the meeting at 8:37 AM. Issues mentioned:

Objective of this Focus Group:

- Gather information about ITS and CVA to update the LRTP 2045, published in 2017 to a newer version.
- The same questions asked during the Focus Group will be e-mailed to all invitees for additional comments if required.
- All attendees introduced themselves.

2. Meeting Advisories and Ground Rules:

Participation in the focus group is anonymous. Pictures were taken and the meeting was recorded. However, no one will be quoted in the plan and MCRPC will not share specific information with others. A list of the participants from all the focus groups will be included as an Appendix in the plan.

3. SWOT Analysis

Ideas to consider:

- A. What capabilities do we have in McLean County and in the state?
- B. Do we have the capacity to adopt new technologies?
- C. How well prepared is the public sector to play in the digital role?
- D. Highly automated vehicles, what is currently available but understand what is being developed
- E. This plan has a 2050 vision but will be updated in 5 years.

Comments:

- Historically public sector was in charge of building and designing infrastructure that private sector would use. What is changing is the connectivity part: it is no longer clear if the responsibility is only of the public sector. Private companies such as Google Maps and Waze collect, understand & drive data.
- It's about digital infrastructure
- Role of public sector: how prepared we are to operate on that digital environment or coordinate information.
- If not prepared, private sector will take over. Private sector will digitize environment and operate on it. For now, public sector is left on the side.
- Lake County has one of the most advanced platforms in IL. They analyze their own data. For counties this means each will be collecting, storing and sharing their own information.

Strengths

- Best fiber networks that exists in country, for state. Next: Think how to use this in a digital environment.
- Extensive road network
- Rural roads have fewer variables in the network. Once you map the environment, there are not much variables.
- Presence of Rivian and EVs, puts our minds thinking forward on technology adaptation.
- Location, having universities, robust pedestrian environment, trails; provides different types of infrastructure to develop research

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- opportunities and test technologies.
- McLean County very responsive. Have been doing partnerships with 911 dispatching. More going on than people realize.
- Fiber network very robust. Partner w/IDOT for traffic signals. Lots things happening.

Weaknesses

- Rural area: will be difficult with autonomous vehicles considering farming equipment. Urbanized area can be OK because it has the technology to handle changes.
- Road conditions, vehicle sensors are dependent on identifying existing environment.
- Public perception (acceptance and understanding). People are not aware of new technologies, difficult to communicate with public.
- Lack of Federal Regulations. No safety standards for Advanced Driver Assistance Vehicles. Higher automation vehicles being tested but there is no federal regulation.
- There are many startup companies that are not held accountable for safety. Public safety is not a top priority for them.

Opportunities

- Communicating/sharing data and ITS platforms between agencies (between public/public, public/private & state/county). Platforms need to get smarter, interconnected and Information shared for CAVs.
- Data has to be compatible with other counties to allow sharing, i.e. Columbus, OH has aggregation of information with ride share companies, infrastructure also feeds there. Information is shared with waze for public use.
- Infrastructure already in place for potential testing.
- How open to innovation are we in this area? (From public and capabilities perception). Other towns that were very open for innovation are now innovation hubs.
 - There is Bloomington-Normal Innovation Alliance (BNIA). Partners include local universities the community college, chamber commerce, CIRBN Network. Looking for projects. Alliance members want it to grow; any help they can get is welcome.
 - Are we really trying to be innovative? Are we willing to jump into experimenting in our community?
- Wireless/5G relationships with providers. The

- wireless infrastructure is great for testing
- Potential safety improvements for people inside & outside vehicles. We have risky behaviors during the past few years.

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Threats

- Road maintenance
- Cyber security, as data will be shared between agencies.
- Finding the right people and organizations to talk to can be problematic.
- Inactivity, competing communities for grant money. Other government organizations get grant money because they are experimenting. The longer we wait, the less chance we have to get money and test new technologies.

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4. Discussion Session

1. To what extent do you think CAV and ITS are interrelated?

- There is no hard dependency. However, as progression towards higher levels of autonomy, CAVs & ITS are more dependent on each other.
- Ideally 100%. Vehicles are a node in a network. If a node is not connected to the network, the network cannot control it. In a mixed network w/ CAVs and human drivers, there are hundreds of independent decisions made on the infrastructure. The less 'controlled' a network, the less safe it is.
- Future of safety is dependent on their interaction
- CAVs are part of ITS

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2. What CAV and ITS technology could be implemented in three years? Ten years?

- CAV running, experimenting shuttle services capabilities locally.
- Technologies exist, it depends on what locals are willing to deploy. What do we have the need in 3 to 10 years? There are companies (e.g. Waymo) capable of coming tomorrow to map our infrastructure and replace Uber and Lyft.
- No infrastructure is required. Vehicles only use cameras and LIDAR systems. Every time a vehicle drives, it re-maps data and uploads it to the system. The more CAVs, the more accurate data would be.
- Highly automated vehicles will not be available for purchase in the marketplace. Perhaps testing will still be happening.
- Lots of testing is done in non-snow climates.

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In winter, we try to get streets clean as soon as possible, potential problem for CAVs. Humans drive without lanes.

- CAVs testing have been done in Ann Arbor & Columbus with success. Also testing in MN for the past 4 years/, mostly successful. Companies are confident to move into winter environments.
- Still lots of issues, that is why this will not happen soon. Computer programs are not ready to anticipate all potential factors yet.
- Initially, CAVs will be implemented as fleets and ride share programs.
- Short term implementation: fiber expansion, ITS cameras, deployment of automated vehicle location systems, AVL, traffic signals, centralized traffic control systems (inter agency cooperation in urban areas). Parking availability system.
- In three years: need to understand who are potential users, experiment and get their feedback. Currently, we are guessing interaction and assume the users understand. Need more experiments even between pedestrians & CAVs.
- Studies of 'Take over-readiness' done in partnership with Michigan University - Interaction human behavior with CAVs. – there is still a lot to look in these ecosystems.
- People are not aware of what ITS and CAVs mean. Can be educated using examples of technology available now to demonstrate what industry is pointing towards and safety.
- Understanding the benefits, beneficial to accept changes.
- Cost savings and time savings are big issues for potential users.

3. How can CAV and ITS potentially be of benefit to the transportation system in our area?

- Build a IT platform that would be adaptable in the future
- Equitable access to transportation - senior population, low income families, people with disabilities, all have the right to access this 'safer technology'. Think how to achieve that.
- In Chicago there is a system: trip alert for data sharing, used to develop travel times. You can subscribe to the system, report and receive information about accidents, delays, etc.
- Challenge will be to develop & transfer information to CAVs.
- Benefits in land use changes, parking lots

will be potentially gone. Given autonomy and sharing, land use can be re-planned.

- Mobility will be a service, like an Uber, people might not need to have their own cars.
- Short-term: signs on streets, if we rely on connectivity of CAVs: some infrastructure will change - we will not need signals or signs anymore.

4. What potential delays and challenges do you expect?

- Lack of funding
- Public perception/privacy
- Public policy, political roadblocks
- Challenge of mixing human drivers with AVs. In 20-30 years, we will still have human drivers. Many unknowns with human drivers e.g. humans more likely to break the law.
- Public organizations in charge of infrastructure where CAVs will operate.
- Think how we develop a platform that will allow CAVs to operate.
- Supply chain. Entire life cycle of data: data generation, aggregation, management.
- Other transportation uses other than getting from Point A to Point B as quickly as possible. Some trips do not need to be shortest route; people want to appreciate scenery, etc.
- We could feed truck routes into 'system' e.g. google maps, waze.
- Weather, power outages
- Power supply reliability

5. How does transportation system safety inform technology development?

- Plenty of specific elements of both CAV and ITS that provide safety improvements. E.g. braking systems
- For CAVs lots still uncovered, e.g. CAVs to human interaction. Do they really provide safety benefit? Many cities they run CAVs between 12 AM to 6 AM, so not truly operating in real environments.
- ITS side, you can see safety is improved. E.g. in pedestrian spaces.
- Can see fewer instances of severe crashes.
- Incident note and notification. Better communicating to drivers, improvements in getting emergency services, secondary crash prevention.

6. What impact do you expect these technologies to have on the built and natural environment?

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- Going full AV would alter need for signage, size of roads, etc. Signage would be digitized
- Lower CO2 emissions. Looking at cars at intersections, trying to move those with higher emissions faster from intersection.
- Variation of land use will be biggest change. You will not need all that parking. Will need curb management.
- EV batteries still use natural resources.

- Will need infrastructure to charge cars.
- Congestion relief. Lots emissions come from idling. ITS can help reduce congestion.
- Potential increase in VMT but less CO2 emissions.

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5. Adjourn

Mr. Lai adjourned the focus group at 10:40 AM

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Photos: CAV and ITS Focus Group Meeting

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